Conclusions of the meeting

Item 13 of the agenda

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Working Group Social Protection
ITEM 1 – OPENING OF THE MEETING

The introduction outlined the main achievements and dissemination improvements implemented internally by Eurostat since the previous Working Group on Social protection held on 5th July 2012.
ITEM 2 – APPROVAL MINUTES PREVIOUS MEETING

In order to approve the minutes of the previous Working Group on Social protection, held on 5th July 2012, Eurostat invited the Working Group to send comments in writing by 9th May 2014.
The Working Group took note of users' needs and their consequences in statistical terms as well as of the policy background and analysis shown by DG SANCO, DG EMPL, ISG and DG ECFIN.
ITEM 4 – ROUTINE STATISTICAL PRODUCTION ACTIVITIES: CURRENT STATUS AND PLANNING

• The Working group took note of the state of play regarding ESSPROS collections during 2013 (reference year 2011) and of the planning for 2014 collections (reference year 2012).

• Eurostat welcomes the early transmission of data and metadata on a voluntary basis.

• It was agreed that at the time of the NET data transmission in December, countries will also transmit revised Gross data when relevant.
ITEM 5.1 – "PENSION BENEFICIARIES"

- The Working Group **noted** the comments received by Eurostat about the **possible use of data on pension beneficiaries**.

- Eurostat **proposals** to better meet user needs on beneficiary data were **discussed**.

- The Working Group concluded:
  - Eurostat proposals were generally acceptable.
  - Additional **voluntary questions** will be added to the next PB questionnaire.
  - Further written answers to be provided within one month

- BOX 1: countries took note
- BOX 2: countries took note
- BOX 3: 17 countries YES
- BOX 4: took note
- BOX 5: 15 countries YES
- BOX 6: 17 countries YES
- BOX 7: countries took note
- BOX 8: 4 countries out of 5 answered yes
- BOX 9: only 3 countries
- BOX 10: 2 yes, 2 no
- BOX 11: very difficult; 2 yes; 3 no
- BOX 12: 1 yes, 1 no
- BOX 13: Sources, different methodologies
ITEM 5.2 – EXTENSION OF THE MODULE TO "OTHER BENEFICIARIES"

• The Working Group took note of the main results of the Workshop on benefit recipients data organised by OECD and the Commission on 3 December 2013.

• The ISG data collection on number of beneficiaries was presented and preliminary results of links with ESSPROS (replies from: AT, HU, LU, RO and SI). Further replies are expected by end April after which Eurostat will make a proposal.

• A possible future extension to the ESSPROS module on pension beneficiaries was discussed.

• The strategy to use ESSPROS as a framework for any further development was adopted.

• Comments on OECD options to be sent to Eurostat
ITEM 6.1 – DISSEMINATION OF DATA BY SCHEMES

• The Working Group agreed that data by scheme and the corresponding metadata will be published on the Eurostat website for countries/reference years with no objections (25 countries), according to the procedure proposed, possibly from the next data collection.

• Eurostat welcomes ongoing efforts to reduce confidentiality problems (7 countries; CH from 2012 data). Eurostat will ensure bilateral contacts to resolve any problems and establish a calendar for each country.
ITEM 6.2 – DISSEMINATION OF DATA BY GROUPS OF SCHEMES

- Some **possible actions** to be applied in case of possible problems (**double classification**) were **discussed** and **approved**. Some specific issues to be clarified bilaterally.

- The Working Group **agreed** to **disseminate data by groups of schemes** for 25 countries. **FR only for next year data collection.**
ITEM 6.3 – OTHER ISSUES RAISED BY THE RECENT USE OF THE DATA

• The Working Group took note of the main aspects and comments received by Eurostat about the two documents elaborated by the SPC-FEE on social protection spending and financing.

• Issues emerging from the analysis of the two documents were discussed.

• The Working Group agreed to support ongoing interaction with ISG and other users of ESSPROS data.

• Eurostat will distribute a document for information.
ITEM 7.1 – RESTRICTED APPROACH

• The Working Group took note of issues emerging during the validation process of the first mandatory data collection on net benefits (restricted approach).

• Specific issues raised by Poland were discussed.

• The methodology is clear and can be implemented. As for other methodologies, clarification of specific issues may still be required.

• Poland informed that they would soon provide net data according to the methodology. Eurostat will assess quality and give feedback through the usual validation process.
ITEM 7.2 – ENLARGED APPROACH

- The Working Group took note of a short review and comments received by Eurostat on the potential methodology for the implementation of the "enlarged approach" presented in the previous Working Group.
- The Working Group agreed on Eurostat’s proposal for a four step strategy.
- The Eurostat proposal of organising a Task force to verify the practical implementation of the proposed methodology to national situations and the implications on the whole ESSPROS system was agreed. IT already prepared an input document.
- The WG noted that input from fiscal experts is necessary. Eurostat will ensure cooperation with OECD and other relevant stakeholders.
ITEM 8 – DATA TRANSMISSION

• The Working Group took note of the need to improve the current data transmission.
• The Working Group is invited to transmit a feedback on the draft Eurostat proposal of the ESSPROS Data Structure Definitions (DSD) and code lists, by mid May 2014.
• The Working Group discussed the Eurostat proposal/schedule for the gradual implementation of the new questionnaires (SDMX-compliant). The gentleman’s agreement was adopted.
• It was agreed that a pilot data transmission exercise will be launched at the end of 2014. LV, RO, SI, SE, DE available for the pilot exercise according to the proposed timetable. Other countries interested to participate in the pilot should inform Eurostat in writing by June.
ITEM 9 – DATA VALIDATION

• The Working Group took note of the need to improve the current data validation process.
• The main aspects of the ESSC data validation general strategy were presented by Eurostat.
• As part of this general strategy, Eurostat presented a first draft list of validation rules together with a procedure for its continuous update.
• Validation rules should be implemented both by Eurostat and by Member States.
• In order to finalise the proposed first list of validation rules, the Working Group was invited to send comments in writing by 15 May 2014.
ITEM 10 – DISSEMINATION

- The Working Group took note of recent and possible further improvements of the dissemination of ESSPROS data and metadata. The proposed developments were agreed.
- The Working Group agreed with the publication of national quality reports for both core system and pension beneficiaries for all the future releases (from 2012 edition).
- An improved draft of the proposed Statistics explained article on "pensions" giving clear guidance on use of the data will be circulated early May. The Working Group will then be invited to provide further comments and suggestions in writing, by 30/06/2014
- The proposed template for the consolidated quality report on net benefit was agreed for future releases.
ITEM 11 – CONTRIBUTION TO THE PREPARATION OF THE ESSPROS CONFERENCE

- **Italy** and **Netherlands** presented their national experiences in compiling Social Protection Statistics.
- **Eurostat** presented the main characteristics of the System of Health Accounts (SHA).
- The Working Group agreed a final version of the users questionnaire and possible distribution options.
- The Working Group discussed on the draft agenda and the possible format of the ESSPROS Conference.
- The conference will take place in November (date to be announced). All ESSPROS delegates will be invited. The final agenda should be ready in June.
ITEM 12.1 - COMPILATION OF SOCIAL PROTECTION STATISTICS BY CANDIDATE COUNTRIES AND POTENTIAL CANDIDATE COUNTRIES

- Eurostat presented the **main steps** required for the **full implementation** of ESSPROS by new countries.

- Eurostat invited candidate and potential candidate countries to communicate, **future plans** for the implementation of ESSPROS, by **15/05/2014** (contact person: Gemma.ASERO@ec.europa.eu)